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ABSTRACT

A comprehensive instructional system to meet the needs of students of differing achievement and grade in the same classroom, this program is characterized by an innovative management system, procedures for continuous assessment of educational needs and achievement, a curriculum based on individual needs, and an emphasis on parent and community involvement. Called Meeting Students' Needs in the Multi-age Group Environment (MSN), the project served 205 students in first, second, and third grades of the Murch Elementary School in Washington, D.C. The evaluation described here focused on implementation of the program, student academic achievement, and self-reliant behavior. Data were gathered through observation, questionnaires, and student achievement tests. Evaluators concluded that (1) the program is meeting student needs in a multiage environment; (2) it can be replicated at other grade levels; (3) parents would like the program expanded to include more children; and (4) there is high parent participation in the program. No appropriate instrument was found to be adequate for the measurement of self-reliance, so such an instrument is being developed. (Author/JM)

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DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

MEETING STUDENTS' NEEDS IN THE MULTIAGE GROUP ENVIRONMENT

E. S. E. A. TITLE IV-C

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Final Evaluation Report

EA 012 512

VINCENT E. REED
Superintendent of Schools

January 1980

PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

MEETING STUDENTS' NEEDS IN THE MULTIAGE GROUP ENVIRONMENT

Final Report

1979

Prepared by
Division of Research and Evaluation

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MEETING STUDENTS' NEEDS IN THE MULTIAGE GROUP ENVIRONMENT

Sheila Ford, Project Director

DIVISION OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Mildred P. Cooper	Assistant Superintendent
June Bland	Assistant for Evaluation

TITLE IV-PART C EVALUATION UNIT

Lavolia Vails	Director
Marcia McBeath	Education Research Assistant
Mark Arenas	Research Assistant
Virginia Wise	Administrative Clerk

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SUMMARY

Title

Meeting Student's Needs in the Multi-Age Group Environment

Project Director

Sheila Ford

Location

Ben W. Murch Elementary School

Target Population

The program was originally written to meet the needs of students in combination classrooms, specifically a 1-2-3 combination. The sample was expanded to include single and combination classes in kindergarten through sixth grades.

Background

The distribution of the Murch student population each year requires that combination classes be formed. Parents and many teachers felt that students' needs could not be adequately met in classes where students were not grouped by chronological age. Research showed, however, that even where students were grouped by age, a large range of abilities was found in any one room. To meet these needs would require a greater emphasis on individualization and competency-based-curriculum. Murch's solution was to work on applying CBC with special management techniques and piloting the program in an extreme multi-age and multi-level environment, a 1-2-3 classroom. After one year of working with that group, the program was expanded to include other levels.

Description of the Project

Through testing and observation of classroom performance, teachers identify individual and group objectives. The objectives are to be met using CBC and teacher-developed materials. Classroom management is accomplished by dividing the class into hetereogeneous groups that work individually or in peer tutoring pairs at learning stations designed to help students review and maintain academic skills. After a specified period of time, the students move to another station following a color-coded schedule called the Road Map. During this time, the teacher selects from the heterogeneous groups, those students with similar skill needs which have been coded on cards using the McBee Key Sort System. With such a management plan, it is important that students are taught to be self-reliant and to be able to work independently. Much of the time in the early weeks is spent on developing and maintaining this behavior.

A special characteristic of the program is the amount and variety of parent involvement as volunteer para-professionals.

Evaluation

Evaluation is focused on implementation of the program (process evaluation), and student academic achievement and self-reliant behavior (product evaluation).

Findings

1. Except where materials did not arrive on time, teachers are following the project management techniques and using the recommended materials.

2. Participating teachers attended a variety of workshops during the summer and after school during the school year.

3. Ninety percent of parents surveyed whose children are not in the program would like them to participate and the majority felt that selection should be by some form of lottery.

4. Parent volunteers helped in all but one classroom and they participated in a variety of ways.

5. Mean gains made in reading by the 1-2-3 combination classes ranged from 1.3 to 2.7 with the mean gain for the combined group being 2.0 years.

6. Mean gains made in arithmetic by the 1-2-3 combination classes ranged from .8 to 1.8 with the mean gain for the combined group being 1.5 years.

7. Starting and ending levels of project CTBS results were well above the national norm and in most cases the slope of increase was greater.

8. No appropriate instrument was found to be adequate for the measurement of self-reliance and independence so an instrument is being developed.

9. Field testing of project concepts and procedures is occurring in five classrooms of varying combinations K-6 in addition to the original 1-2-3 classroom.

Conclusions

1. The program is meeting students needs in a multiage environment.

2. The program can be replicated at other grade levels.

3. Parents would like the program expanded to include more children.

4. There is a high percentage of parent participation in the program.

5. Self-reliance/Independence in children is an important variable that needs to be measured.

BACKGROUND AND PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Introduction

Purpose - The purpose of the MSN project, MEETING STUDENT'S NEEDS IN THE MULTI-AGE GROUP ENVIRONMENT, is to provide a comprehensive instructional system to meet the needs of students of differing achievement age and grade level who are in the same classroom. The program is characterized by an innovative management system, a procedure for continuous assessment of educational needs and achievement, a curriculum based on individual needs, and an emphasis on parent and community involvement.

Need - The need for the project arose from the distribution of the Murch student population from year to year which required the formation of combination classrooms. Groups of faculty and parents met to try to solve the problems. The solution agreed upon was to establish a pilot first-second-third combination classroom that used the CBC system for all academic subjects and employed special management techniques.

History - During the first year of the project, 1977-78, curriculum and management techniques were developed and tested in one combination 1-2-3 classroom at the Ben W. Murch Elementary School. During that year the project was successful in promoting the attainment of knowledge, competencies, and skills in that multiage group environment.

During the second year of operation 1978-79, the program was expanded to other single and combination classrooms at Murch and at a non-public school. The management and instructional techniques were further developed and refined.

During the third and fourth years, the project will be enlarged to included other District of Columbia Public School classrooms.

Description of the Project

Target Population - There are approximately 205 students participating in the project this year selected on the basis of parent request. Project classrooms at Murch are: one kindergarten; two 1-2-3 combination classes; one 4-5 combination class; and 5-6 combination class and one sixth grade. Classes at the non-public school, the Mater Amoris Montessori School are: one 1-2-3 combination class and one 4-5-6 combination class.

Staffing - The staff consists of eight classroom teachers one of whom is the project director, one administrative assistant, and three part-time teacher assistants. The paid staff is supplemented by volunteers from the community. Salaries of the administrative assistant and the part-time teacher assistants are funded by Title IV-C.

The Murch Project Approach

Testing - Emphasing specific content area tests, teachers continually monitor student progress. A battery of diagnostic instruments are administered during the first two weeks of school. See appendix A. This phase is followed by periodic reassessment on the Prescriptive Reading and Math Tests

as well as other criterion based instruments, with a final assessment on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (CTBS).

Diagnostic/Precriptive Teaching - Based on the results of testing and each child's classroom performance, the teachers identify individual and group instructional objectives. The objectives are taught in a competency - based curriculum (CBC) framework.

Materials - CBC materials for reading, mathematics and science are presently in use. In areas where no CBC materials are available, teachers develop or adapt materials to fit the individualized or small group needs.

Learning Stations - Road Map - In order to manage small groups and individualized instruction, activities of the whole class are carefully planned and coordinated. This is accomplished by dividing the class into heterogeneous groups, each group working at a separate Learning Station. Examples of Learning Stations are: language arts, math, social studies, science, and student's choice where students might be involved in activities such as art, crafts, pleasure reading, and film strip viewing. At the Learning Stations students participate in individualized lessons for review and maintenance of previously taught skills. An enrichment station provides a variety of new assignments in academic areas. The heterogeneous groups of students move from station to station following a color-coded schedule called the Road Map.

The process of following the Road Map and using the Learning Stations encourages self-reliance, independence and responsibility. Examples of the students' involvement in their own learning process are: self-recording of individual progress at learning stations; moving from station to station at the sound of a signal from a kitchen timer; and peer tutoring which can involve consulting with each other on assignments or having older students explaining difficult problems to younger ones. Perhaps most significant is the fact that the students are engaged in their activities without direct teacher supervision.

Skill Grouping - With the students using the Learning Stations independently, the teacher is free for small group instruction. The teacher selects from the heterogeneous groups, those students with similar skill needs. The selection is accomplished through the use of previously coded cards indicating skill mastery in academic areas. The procedure is called the McBee Key Sort System. After the students are presented with a lesson, they return to the Road Map/Learning Station activities and a new group, selected by the McBee system, is called to the teacher-directed activity center.

Staff Development - Teachers are involved in a parent-teacher tutor workshop in August. Monthly meetings are held by the project director to assist teachers new to the project.

Parent Involvement - A special characteristic of the Murch project is the amount and variety of parent involvement. The parents' participation in the project effectively supplements the teachers' time and flexibility in the classroom. As volunteer para-professionals, they receive training and serve as part-time teacher aides. They also serve to enrich the curriculum by sharing skills such as cooking, carpentry and French.

Stated Objectives

The following procedures will be implemented by the classroom teachers and project coordinator for a period of one school year; open classroom; multi-aged and multi-level grouping; diagnostic/prescriptive teaching strategies; competency-based teaching materials in reading, mathematics; and data retrieval system.

As a result the student will:

A. Significantly increase skills attainment and achievement by a minimum of two years as measured by the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills.

B. Significantly increase independence, self-reliance, and responsibility as measured biannually by the Early School Personality Questionnaire (ESPQ).

C. The above procedures will provide a field test of project concepts and procedures and demonstrate the validity of those objectives prior to further testing in various other socio-economic and geographic areas within the District. Success will be measured by the degree of accomplishment of Objectives 1 and 2.

EXTERNAL EVALUATION DESIGN

The external evaluation is designed to measure the three objectives to find the degree to which they were met, and to evaluate the process used to reach them. The purpose is to determine the success/effectiveness of the project and to examine certain aspects pertaining to exportability.

Process Evaluation

1. A review of a classroom observation check-list to see if procedures and practices were adhered to as designated in the proposal

2. An examination of teacher questionnaires to determine the distribution of grades of respondents

3. An analysis by percent of teachers using proposed instructional practices to illustrate adherence to or deviation from the proposal

4. An analysis by percent of tests used or developed by participating teachers to show the variety of instruments used in addition to the standardized tests

5. An analysis by percent of management techniques reported as used by teachers to illustrate adherence to or deviation from the program

6. An analysis by percent of examples given by teachers to indicate what is considered self-reliant/independent behavior

7. An analysis by percent of workshops, meetings and other school functions attended by teachers to determine staff commitment to the program

8. An analysis by percent of types of workshops attended by teachers to demonstrate amount and variety of involvement

9. An analysis by percent of teachers' perception of parent involvement to indicate parent participation in the program

10. An analysis by percent of ways in which parents are informed of their children's progress to determine the importance of this aspect of the program

11. An analysis by percent of non-program parents wanting their children in the program to illustrate the grade distribution of those wishing to participate

12. An examination of criteria suggested by parents as a fair way to choose participants to show the variety of ideas and to determine if there was a majority opinion

13. An analysis by percent of parents responding to a questionnaire to determine representation

14. An analysis by percent of classroom participation by parent volunteers to demonstrate frequency

15. An examination of activities volunteered by parents to demonstrate variety

16. An analysis by percent of practical life skills taught by parents to show the degree and type participation

17. An analysis by percent of parent involvement in workshops to show the degree and type of participation

18. An examination of workshop ideas listed by parents to show those considered useful in helping children at home

19. An analysis by percent of parent involvement in the NEWSLETTER to determine its importance

20. An analysis by percent of parent attendance at meetings to demonstrate commitment to the program

Product Evaluation

Objective A - Increase in academic skills

1. A comparison of pre/post-test CTBS scores in reading and arithmetic to determine if the mean gain is two years or more

2. A graphic comparison of project CTBS scores in reading and arithmetic to CTBS national norms to see if the slope of increase differs

Objective B - Increase in independence, self-reliance, and responsibility

1. A description of the search for an appropriate instrument, to show the necessity of developing a measure

2. A description of the instrument being developed to facititate understanding of the measurement problem

(Note) - Objective B was not measured as stated but the machinery was set in motion for future measurement.

Objective C - Field Testing

1. A reference to the process evaluation to check if concepts and procedures as described in the proposal were being field tested.

Exportability

Items to be discussed are those of particular relevance to this project: Learner involvement in the program; community and home variables; and activities critical to the success of the project.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Process Evaluation

Classroom Observation Data - Following several visits to the project classrooms, the evaluators completed a checklist designed to determine adherence to procedures and practices as designated in the proposal. (See Appendix B).

Items concerned with the management system, both Records Management and Classroom Management were observed as taking place except that the McBee key sort was not in evidence. Curriculum items, both on Materials and Instruction, were seen as complying with proposal statements.

In the area of assessment, diagnostic/prescriptive testing was indicated as was pre-post testing on standardized academic instruments. A measure of self-reliance and independence was not administered.

Compliance with proposal procedures and practices was observed in all areas except use of the McBee Key Sort and administration of a behavioral measure.

Teacher Questionnaire - In order to assess teacher involvement in the project, teachers were asked to complete a questionnaire. (See Appendix C.)

Questionnaires were completed by five of the six teachers (excluding the project director who also taught a 1-2-3 combination class.) Question 1 asked, "What grade levels are represented in your classroom, i.e. how many students are first graders, how many are second graders etc.?" Respondents included teachers of all levels K through 6. (See Table I).

TABLE I

Distribution of Grades Taught
by Questionnaire Respondents

Number of Teachers	Grades Included in One Class	Number of Students
1	K	23
1	1	10
	2	6
	3	10
1	4	20
	5	6
1	5	12
	6	13
1	6	27
Totals: 5	9	127

As may be seen in Table I, classes represented contained one, two, and three grades, with the minimum number of students in a combination class being 25.

Questions 2 and 3 were concerned with the use of various instructional devices. (See Table II.)

TABLE II

Instructional Practices Used

	Yes		No		No Response	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Math Drill Kit	3	60%	2	40%	-	-
Spelling Package	1	20%	4	80%	-	-
"Book Talks" Program	-	-	4	80%	1	20%
Practical Life Experiences such as Cooking and Carpentry	5	100%	-	-	-	-

Those who used the listed math and spelling materials reported once-a-week use. Comments from all respondents concerning the "Book Talks" program were that the materials did not arrive. Under Practical Life Experiences, all respondents listed cooking and where time was specified said once a week.

Question 4 was concerned with tests other than the PRT, PMT AND CTBS, used or developed. Table III lists the instruments and summarizes the number mentioning that test.

TABLE III

Additional Tests Used or Developed

Name of Instrument	Respondents Listing Instrument	
	Number	Percent
Morrison McCall Spelling Test	3	60%
Graded Word List	3	60%
IRI	3	60%
Random House Pre-Post Test	2	40%
Dolch Word List	1	20%
Weekly Spelling Test	1	20%
Weekly Math Drill Test	1	20%
Informal Inventories from Texts	1	20%

Thus, a variety of evaluation materials were used by participating teachers.

Also included were items related to classroom management techniques, Questions 5a, b, c, and d. (See Table IV).

TABLE IV

Management Techniques Used in the Classroom

Questionnaire Item	Technique	Number of Respondents Using the Technique	Percent of Respondents Using the Technique
5a	Learning Stations	5	100%
5b	McBee Key Sort System	0	-
5c	Peer Tutoring	5	100%
5d	Self-Reliant/Independent Student Learning Opportunities	4	80%

In comments concerning question 5a, the average and usual number of learning stations was six. A typical example given by a teacher, of stations used was: Phonovisual, Rhymes, Math, Handwriting, Reading Comprehension, and Art.

The McBee Key Sort System mentioned in Question 5b, was used by none of the respondents because the materials did not arrive. Only the 1-2-3 class taught by the project director (who was not asked to complete a questionnaire) had the McBee materials available. They will be used during the next school year.

Question 5c asked for examples of peer tutoring. Examples given were, "Readers help those in need of help with letters of the alphabet, beginning sounds, etc." "Research skills taught to 2nd graders; each student was an assigned proofreader for another classmate."

Question 5D asked what the respondents considered self-reliant/independent behavior to be. Table V classifies the results.

TABLE V

Teachers' Reports of What is Considered Self-Reliant/Independent Behavior

Description of Behavior	Teachers Suggesting This Category*	
	Number	Percent
Following oral and written directives	3	60%
After completion of first assignment continuing with next	2	40%
Knowing what to do after completing assignments	2	40%
Obtaining materials and returning materials on one's own	2	40%
Bringing activities from home and taking activities into home	1	20%
Keeping checklist of completed assignments	1	20%

* Some teachers gave more than one suggestion

Question 5d2 asked how teachers arranged for self-reliant/independent behavior to occur. In general, teachers reported spending time with the group as a whole, explaining procedures. It was felt that the Road Map management plan helps to encourage self-reliant/independent behavior.

Question 6 was concerned with workshops, meetings, and other school functions attended. Table VI summarizes the findings.

TABLE VI

Meetings Attended

Type	Yes		No		No Response	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Summer Workshops	5	100%	-	-	-	-
Parent Meetings	4	80%	-	-	1	20%
School Functions	4	80%	-	-	1	20%

Parent meetings and school functions referred to in Table VI included home-school meetings, picnic, and open house.

The types of workshops reported are summarized in Table VII.

TABLE VII
Types of Workshops Attended*

Type	Respondents	
	Number	Percent
Parents and Teachers as a School Team	3	60%
Handwriting	3	60%
Math	2	40%
Reading	2	40%
Classroom Management	2	40%
Testing	2	40%
Setting Up Learning Stations	1	20%
Title IV Workshop	1	20%

* Some teachers attended more than one summer workshop. The above categories were those listed by the teachers.

According to these data, teachers are demonstrating commitment to the program.

Questions 7 and 8 related to parent involvement from the teachers' point of view. (See Table VIII).

TABLE VIII

Teachers' Perception of Parent Involvement

Question	Yes		No		No Response	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Have you used parent volunteers in the classroom?	4	80%	1	20%	-	-
Do you inform parents of child progress?	5	100%	-	-	-	-

Parent volunteers were used in a variety of ways as indicated in Table IX.

TABLE IX

Use of Parent Volunteers

Cooking
Teaching French
Playing Musical Instrument
Tutoring
Preparing Dittoes
Typing
Helping on Field Trips
Correcting Papers

Question 8 asked how parents are informed of children's progress. Table X summarizes the reported ways.

TABLE X

Informing Parents of Children's Progress*

Method	Number	Percent
Telephone	4	80%
Written notes	4	80%
Conferences	3	60%
Weekly folders sent home	2	40%
Informal meetings	1	20%
List of skills taught sent home	1	20%

* Some teachers reported using more than one method.

Keeping parents informed appears to be considered by teachers as an important aspect of the program.

Overall results of the questionnaire suggest that teachers are involved in the program as planned.

Parent Questionnaires - Two questionnaires were sent to parents in the Murch School. One, as part of an internal evaluation, was sent to all parents, asking for criteria for placement in the MSN program. The other was sent to parents of participating children, by the external evaluating team, to assess the parent involvement component of the program.

Criteria for Placement - In February, 1979, 482 questionnaires were distributed to all of the students enrolled in the Murch School. Forms were returned by 96 parents representing their 122 children (25% of the Murch enrollment). The questionnaire contained three items:

1. Are any of your children participating in the Title IV project?

2. If the answer to 1. is NO, would you want your child/children to be in the project? If so, at what grade level?

3. What reasonable criteria would you suggest for placement of students in classes?

Responses to Question 1 are summarized in Table XI.

TABLE XI

Distribution of Questionnaire Returns by Parents of Students
In the MSN Program and Not in the Program

Child in Program?					
YES		NO		NO RESPONSE	
Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
54	44%	62	51%	6	5%

If Yes, Grade Level?													
K		1		2		3		4		5		6	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
5	9%	10	19%	12	22%	10	19%	5	9%	6	11%	6	11%

Of students presently enrolled in the program, the number of parents who responded to the questionnaire was 54 as may be seen in the above table. That number represents 35% of the 154 participating students.

Question 2 asked for the grade distribution of children not presently in the program, whose parents desired them to be in it. (See Table XII).

TABLE XII

Distribution of Responses of Parents of
Children Not Participating in the MSN Program

Want Child in Program

YES		NO	
Number	Percent	Number	Percent
54	90%	6	10%

If Yes, Grade Level

K		1		2		3		4		5		6	
#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
4	8%	11	21%	9	17%	7	13%	4	8%	7	13%	11	21%

As may be seen from the above tables, the distribution of grade levels of children whose parents would like them in the program covers all grade levels as does that of those presently participating.

The third question asked parents to suggest reasonable criteria for selection of participants. This is an important point when enrollment must be limited. Some of the questionnaires listed more than one criterion, sometimes ranking in order of priority. In Table XIII below, all criteria mentioned received one vote. Criteria receiving less than 5 votes were not reported. six respondents asked "What is the project?" The question was not answered by 25 respondents.

TABLE XIII

Criteria Suggested for Placement
of Students in the MSN Program

Rank	Criteria	Number of Parents Suggesting Criteria
1	Lottery	25
2	Teacher/Principal Recommendation	19
3	Balance-Racial/Ethnic/Test Scores	11
5	Child Able to Work Independently	9
5	Parent Recommendation	9
5	Lottery of Parent Requests	9
7	Lottery of Teacher/Parent Recommendation	7

As may be seen in Table XIII, some form of lottery was recommended in almost half the responses.

The questionnaire, in general, shows that responding parents of non-participating students are overwhelmingly in favor of the program and they believe the opportunity for participation should be by lottery.

Parent Involvement - A separate questionnaire was sent to parents of all participating students. (See Appendix D). Out of 153 forms sent home, 57 were returned representing 60 children or 39.2% of those in the program.

Classroom representation as reported in Question 1, was somewhat skewed although at least two forms were returned by every class. (See Table XIV).

Table XIV

Classroom Representation of Parent Questionnaires Returned

Class Code (In Random Order)	Number	Percent
A	17	28%
B	8	13%
C	5	8%
D	18	30%
E	2	3%
F	10	17%
Total	60	

The second question asked about classroom participation. (See Table XV).

TABLE XV

Parent Classroom Participation

Type of Volunteer Function	Respondents (N=57) Yes		No		No Response	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Testing	16	26.7%	23	38.3%	21	35.0%
Typing	8	13.3%	26	43.3%	26	43.3%
Tutoring	17	28.3%	21	35.0%	22	36.7%
Class Trips or Picnics	25	41.7%	20	33.3%	15	25.0%
Training Other Parents	7	11.7%	26	43.3%	27	45.0%
Other	21	35.0%	16	26.7%	23	38.3%

As may be seen in Table XV, there was a wide variety of participation, with the largest percent of parents involved in class trips and picnics.

In addition to checking the activities, parents were asked how frequently they participated in them. Table XVI gives the range of frequency of participation.

TABLE XVI

Range of Frequency of Participation
in Volunteer Activities by Parents

Type of Volunteer Function	Range of Time Volunteered	
	From	To
Testing	One day	One day a week
Typing	--	One morning per week
Tutoring	Four times	Half day per week
Class Trips or Picnics	Occasionally	One day per week
Training other Parents	Whenever necessary	Summer and evening workshops

The amount of time reported above shows a great deal of commitment to the program.

Parents were also asked in Question 2 to describe activities where "other" was checked. (See Table XV). Table XVII lists the other activities and indicates the number of parents mentioning each one.

TABLE XVII

Other Activities Volunteered By Parents

Type of Activity	Number of Times Listed
Clerical work, grading papers, filing, preparing homework	6
Cooking	5
Assisting in classroom	3
Art projects	2
Lunch aide	2
Composition lesson	1
Taught human rights law and process of filing a discrimination complaint	1
Language teacher	1
Special project - history of the neighborhood	1
Coordinated parent volunteers in the classroom	1

Similar to the above were some of the responses to Question 3 in which parents were asked if they had been able to share a practical life skill, and if so to state how often and describe the activity. (See Tables XVIII and XIX).

TABLE XVIII

Sharing a Practical Life Skill

Question	Yes		No		No Response	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Have you been able to share a practical life skill such as carpentry, cooking, poetry, or art with any project classroom?	26	43.3%	33	55%	1	1.7%

Almost half of the respondents have shared a practical life skill with a class. The types, number contributing, and time involved, where reported, are summarized in Table XIX.

TABLE XIX

Types of Practical Life Skills Shared

Type of Skill	Amount of Time Volunteered	Number of Parents Listing that Skill
Art and Cooking	1-6 Times per year	16
Social Studies and Cooking	Once a week	2
Writing compositions	—	2
Poetry	Once every two weeks	2
French	Twice a week	2
Sign language	—	1
Carpentry	Once a week	1
Slides of China/Discussion	--	1
Conducting Interviews	—	1

The life skills shared were rich and varied.

The second section of the parent questionnaire was concerned with workshops. (See table XX).

Table XX

Parent Involvement in Workshops

	Yes		No		No Response	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Have you attended any project workshops, e.g. summer workshops, night workshops?	23	38.3%	33	55%	4	6.7%
Have you used anything you learned from workshops to assist your child at home?	17	28.3%	22	40%	19	31.7%

Most of the attendance at workshops was during the summer (19). Types of workshops attended are summarized in Table XXI.

TABLE XXI

Parent Workshops Attended

Type	Number Listing That Workshop
Reading Readiness	6
Mathematics	6
All Workshops	4
Cooking	2
Student Testing	2
Modern Dance	1
Organization of Title IV Classroom	1

The parents who felt they had learned something from the workshops that could be used at home listed a variety of ideas. (See Table XXII).

TABLE XXII

Workshop Ideas to Assist Child at Home

Type	Number Listing That Type
Mathematics	8
Reading	4
Spelling	1
Testing	1
Chip-Trading	1
Positive Attitude	1
Words on Cardboard Game	1
Breakdown of Difficult Words	1
Parent's Influence	1

Mathematics and reading ideas dominate the list.

The third section of the questionnaire was on the program in general. Question 6 asked specifically about the Newsletter. (See Table XXIII).

TABLE XXIII

Questions Concerning the NEWSLETTER

	Yes		No		No Response	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Have you found the NEWSLETTER to be useful?	48	80%	6	10%	6	10%
Have you in any way contributed to the NEWSLETTER?	6	10%	49	81.7%	5	8.3%

Parents reported that the newsletter was informative in such ways as explaining the origin and funding of the project. It promoted communication; and it helped coordinate home learning.

Activities of the six parents who checked that they had contributed to the NEWSLETTER are summarized in Table XXIV.

TABLE XXIV

Contributions of Parents to NEWSLETTER

Type	Number of Parents Listing that Contribution
Wrote a Feature Article	3
Edited Articles	1
Typing and Writing	1
Letters to Editor	1

Table XXIV above shows that parents were actively involved in the NEWSLETTER.

Question 7 was concerned with parent attendance at project-related meetings. (See Table XXV).

TABLE XXV

Parent Attendance at Project-Related Meetings

	Yes		No		No Response	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Home and School Association	52	86.7%	7	11.7%	1	2%
Project Parent Meetings (Family Gatherings, Picnics)	48	80%	7	11.7%	5	8.3%
Neighborhood Discussion Meetings Concerning Project	38	63.3%	18	30%	4	6.7%

Several parents reported attending all of the meetings. Cooperation in this area was especially high.

Questions 8, 9, and 10 were concerned with parents' views of the project and ideas for improvement. Those comments are reproduced in total in Appendix E. The parents that responded either felt good about their participation or stated that they had no time to be involved. Most parents reported feeling positive about the effect of the program on their children.

A variety of suggestions for improvement were offered ranging from "More activities—art, music, writing" to "Explaining at beginning of year to parents, goals, procedures, and methodology."

One opinion expressed was the perceived high pressure of the program. "Too much competition among children, pushing them too hard and too fast, too much emphasis on tests, wide age range can cause social stress." Positive comments dealt generally with the excellence of the program and the good effect on that person's child.

The questionnaires in general show much parent participation and interest in the program as well as intelligent questioning of some of the procedures.

The process evaluation verifies that, in general, the project is proceeding as proposed.

Product Evaluation

Objective A - Increase in academic skills

The Comprehensive Tests of Basis Skills (CTBS) was the instrument used to measure achievement growth in the two combination 1-2-3 classes. The CTBS, first published in 1968, is a widely used standardized measure of achievement. Buros 7th and 8th Mental Measurements Year Books generally give it good reviews. One statistical characteristic of the test which makes it useful for comparing scores across levels is the Expanded Standard Score (ESS). The ES Scores can be averaged and then converted to Grade Equivalents which can show group changes over time.

In the 1-2-3 combination classes tested, different levels of the test were given as shown in Table XXVI. Where students scored near the ceiling on the Pre-test, the next higher level was given on the post-test.

TABLE XXVI

Levels of CTBS Administered Pre- and Post- to Students in the 1-2-3 Combination Classes

Grade	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	Level	Form	Level	Form
1	B	S	B	T*
2	C	S	1	T
3	1	T	2	T

* Three students were given Level C, Form S

The fact that the students were generally given higher levels of the CTBS on the post-test (as shown in Table XXVI above) suggests that the students are not average students from the middle of the normal curve. Test results bear out that the students in this project tend to achieve above average even on the pre-test.

The results of the pre-post (Fall-Spring) testing in Reading are summarized in Table XXVII.

TABLE XXVII

Mean CTBS Pre-Post Test Results of Students in the Combination 1-2-3 Classes in Reading

Grade	EXPANDED STANDARD SCORE				Grade Equivalent		
	PRE		POST				
	Score	Standard Deviation	Score	Standard Deviation	Pre	Post	Gain
1	289	37	376	58	2.0	3.6	1.6
2	391	38	487	78	4.0	6.7	2.7
3	494	74	533	97	7.0	8.3	1.3
Combined 1-2-3	390	107	462	105	3.9	5.9	2.0

The mean gain for the group in reading was two years.

The results of the pre-post (Fall-Spring) testing in arithmetic are summarized in Table XXVIII.

TABLE XXVIII

Mean CTBS Pre-Post Test Results of Students
in the Combination 1-2-3 Classes in Arithmetic

	EXPANDED STANDARD SCORE						
	PRE		POST				
Grade	Score	Standard Deviation	Score	Standard Deviation	Grade Equivalent Pre	Post	Gain
1	271	42	344	48	1.8	3.3	1.5
2	318	36	391	45	2.8	4.6	1.8
3	412	52	443	49	5.1	5.9	.8
Combined 1-2-3	334	77	393	66	3.1	4.6	1.5

The mean gain for the group in arithmetic was a year and a half.

Project results may also be compared with national norms and this was done by Alan Fox, Statistical Consultant to the project. His graph is reproduced in Table XXIX.

TABLE XXIX

Project Results Compared With National Norms (CTBS)

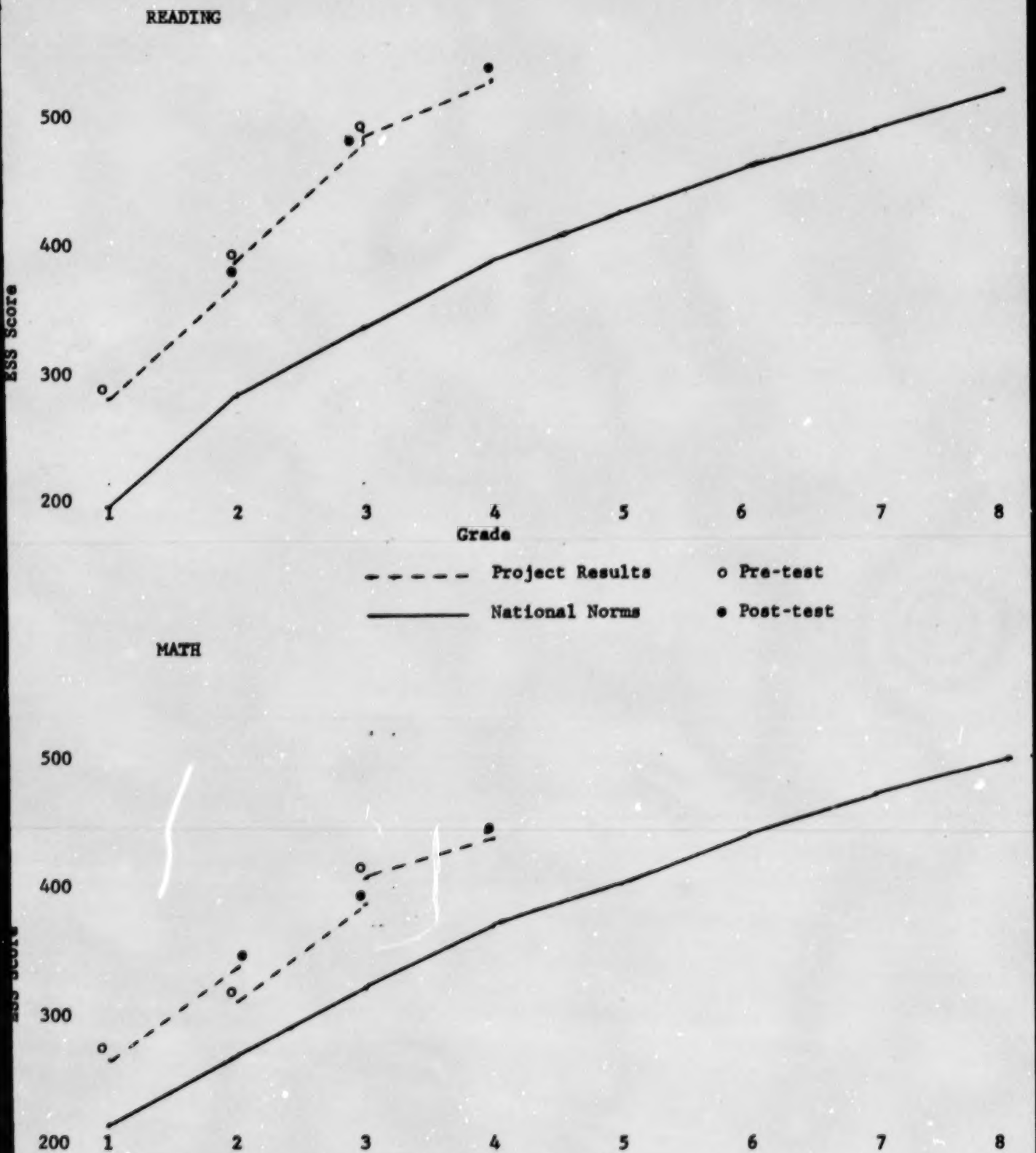

Table XXIX shows levels and gains of the three project grades compared with the national norm, ESS. Mr. Fox explains that in all cases the starting and ending levels were well above the national norm. With the exception of the mathematics score of third graders, the gains were greater than expected from the national norm; i.e. the slope of the lines was steeper than the slope of the national norm line in that grade.

Objective A states that there will be significant skills attainment and achievement by a minimum of two years. There was significant skills attainment in both reading and arithmetic and there was a mean two-year growth in reading.

Objective B - Increase in independence, self-reliance, and responsibility

The objective as originally written was to use the Early School Personality Questionnaire (ESPQ) as the measuring instrument. The instrument, however, was determined to be inadequate for measuring the independence/self-reliance/responsibility trait. A review of the literature, including an ERIC search revealed a variety of inferential measures but little that gave the objective data desired in this project.

The management system integral to the success of the MSN program requires that students be able to work independently while the teacher helps small groups with specific skills. Although the characteristic of working independent of the teacher or another adult should be built into any program using individualized instruction, very few studies of those reviewed considered it important enough to measure.

Since increase in the areas of independence, self-reliance, and responsibility is a prime objective of the MSN project, it was determined that an instrument should be developed. The procedure was planned and revised by the Title IV-C Evaluation Unit and is in the process of being developed. (See Appendix F). It encompasses an observational technique which will produce objective scoring. The instrument, referred to as the SIR Scale: A Measure of Self-reliance; Independence; Responsibility, was initially field tested during the spring of 1979 with revisions made at that time for standardization during the 1979-80 school year.

Objective B was not tested as stated but the machinery was set in motion for future measurement.

Objective C - Field test of project concepts and procedures

The process evaluation above shows that the concepts and procedures as described in the proposal were being implemented. In addition, the project was expanded from one 1-2-3 classroom to six classrooms covering grades K - 6 in the Murch School.

Exportability

In their manual, SHARING EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS, A Handbook of Validation of Educational Practices, (1976), the United States Office of Education considers a validated practice exportable if, ((1) It is feasible to transport it to

other school districts, and (2) it can be adopted or adapted by other school districts with similar needs and environments" (p.46). In addition to the success/effectiveness of the project, exportability is judged on the basis of the following 13 criteria:

1. Learner Needs
2. Continuation of Learner Elements with State or Local Funds
3. Willingness to Serve as a Demonstration Site if Funded for Dissemination
4. Target Population
5. Learner Involvement
6. Institutional Variables
7. Community and Home Variables
8. Activities Critical to Success
9. Essential Materials (Software)
10. Essential Equipment (Hardware) or Unique Facilities
11. Personnel
12. Personnel Training
13. Special Problems

All 13 items under exportability are applicable in the project. However, the items that were considered most important for this project were: Learner involvement in the program; community and home variables; and activities critical to the success of the project.

Learner Involvement in the Program - During the time students spend on the Learning Stations-Road Map part of the program, the teacher works with a small group on a particular skill. It is essential that those not with the teacher are trained to work independently without constant adult supervision. Part of this is accomplished with peer tutoring and part of it in individualized self-monitored instruction.

Community and Home Involvement - Parents and other members of the community contribute time and skills which both enrich the program and add to its smooth running. Before replicating this project, other schools should assess the availability of the exceptional amount of time donated by parents and other community members.

Activities Critical to Success - The program relies on testing for determining skill group instruction and educational goals, flexible skill grouping, and an innovative record keeping and classroom management system using stations where heterogeneous groups

work independently on multi-level materials for instructional maintenance and extension of skills, while teacher-directed small group instruction is going on.

Findings

1. Except where materials did not arrive on time, teachers are following the project management techniques and using the recommended materials.

2. Participating teachers attended a variety of workshops during the summer and after school during the school year.

3. Ninety percent of parents surveyed whose children are not in the program would like them to participate and the majority felt that selection should be by some form of lottery.

4. Parent volunteers helped in all but one classroom and they participated in a variety of ways.

5. Mean gains made in reading by the 1-2-3 combination classes ranged from 1.3 to 2.7 with the mean gain for the combined group being 2.0 years.

6. Mean gains made in arithmetic by the 1-2-3 combination classes ranged from .8 to 1.8 with the mean gain for the combined group being 1.5 years.

7. Starting and ending levels of project CTBS results were well above the national norm and in most cases the slope of increase was greater.

8. No appropriate instrument was found to be adequate for the measurement of self-reliance and independence so an instrument is being developed.

9. Field testing of project concepts and procedures is occurring in five classrooms of varying combinations, K - 6, in addition to the original 1-2-3 classroom.

CONCLUSIONS

1. THE PROGRAM IS MEETING STUDENTS' NEEDS IN A MULTIAGE ENVIRONMENT. It is demonstrating that children can achieve as well or better than children in the CTBS standardization sample.

2. THE PROGRAM CAN BE REPLICATED AT OTHER GRADE LEVELS. Teachers are successfully implementing the program in single and combination classes K through 6.

3. PARENTS WOULD LIKE THE PROGRAM EXPANDED TO INCLUDE MORE CHILDREN. Ninety percent of the surveyed parents of students not in the program would like their children to participate. Parents of children in the program had positive feelings about the effect of it on their children.

4. THERE IS A HIGH PERCENTAGE OF PARENT PARTICIPATION IN THE PROGRAM. Teachers and parents reported on the extent and variety of parent participation and it was found to be extensive.

5. SELF-RELIANCE/INDEPENDENCE IN CHILDREN IS AN IMPORTANT VARIABLE THAT NEEDS TO BE MEASURED. Since students are required to work independently while the teacher is involved in helping small groups with specific skills, they need to be able to demonstrate task-oriented behavior without continuous adult supervision. Measuring this trait will provide data that can assist teachers in developing and maintaining such behavior.

EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE SHOULD BE SIMPLIFIED. Much of the same data as that collected could be determined from a check list rather than open-ended questions. Using the range of responses on this year's questionnaire, a revision can be made.

2. SOME FORM OF STUDENT INPUT SHOULD BE SAMPLED. Data is being collected from teachers and from parents. It would be helpful to have the opinions of the main participants—the students.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF-RELIANCE/INDEPENDENCE/RESPONSIBILITY (SIR) SCALE SHOULD BE COMPLETED. The instrument should be tested in classrooms to determine subject reactivity, inter-rater reliability, validity, and instrument decay.

4. A DETERMINATION SHOULD BE MADE AS TO WHETHER OR NOT OBJECTIVE C IS NECESSARY AND IF IT IS FEASIBLE TO MEASURE IT AS STATED. Since the purpose of the project is to test an innovative approach, the project itself is a field test.

APPENDIX A

DIAGNOSTIC TESTS ADMINISTERED DURING THE FIRST TWO WEEKS OF SCHOOL

DIAGNOSTIC TESTS ADMINISTERED DURING THE FIRST TWO WEEKS OF SCHOOL

The battery of diagnostic tests used in the project were developed or identified at The George Washington University Reading Clinic and the D. C. Department of Reading. In addition to the Prescriptive Reading Test (PRT) and the Prescriptive Mathematics Test (PMT) used in all Murch School classes, they include:

a. SRA Level Placement and Chapter Placement Math Tests,

b. The Graded Word List (K-12),

c. The Kindergarten-First Grade Phonics Test,

d. Informal Reading Inventory (K-12).

e. Morrison-McCall Spelling Inventory (1-9), and

f. a special composition and handwriting sample.

APPENDIX B

EVALUATORS' OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

FOR THE MEETING STUDENTS' NEEDS PROJECT

EVALUATORS' OBSERVATION CHECKLIST
FOR THE MEETING STUDENTS' NEEDS PROJECT

	Yes	No
I. Management System		
A. Records Management		
1. Is the McBee Key Sort System being used?		X
2. Are other types of records management being used	X	
B. Classroom Management		
1. Are the students heterogeneously divided into six teams?	X	
2. Are activities at the learning stations individualized?	X	
3. Is there evidence of peer tutoring?	X	
4. Is there evidence that self-reliance, independence, and responsibility are being promoted through the individualized instruction?	X	
II. Curriculum		
A. Materials		
1. Are multilevel instructional materials being used?	X	
2. Do the materials include a hierarchy of skill development for each target (terminal) objective?	X	
3. Is storage equipment available that allows for easy access to materials in order to increase self-reliance, independence, and responsibility in students?	X	
B. Instruction		
1. Is CBC in evidence; i.e. needs identified, tasks assigned to meet the needs, and mastery test administered?	X	
2. Is there evidence of skill grouping?	X	
3. Is there evidence of a variety of manipulative experiences to allow for development from the concrete, semi-concrete, and abstract levels?	X	

	Yes	No
III. Assessment		
A. Pre-testing		
1. Were informal reading and math tests administered in September by coordinator and trained volunteers?	X	
2. Was the PRT/PMT administered in September?	X	
3. Was a behavior checklist administered by September?		X
B. Continuous Assessment		
1. Is there evidence of continuous prescriptive testing for all students	X	
C. Post-testing		
1. Was the Self-Reliance/Independence Test administered in the spring?		X
2. Was a behavior checklist administered in the spring?		X
3. Was citywide testing done in the spring?	X	

APPENDIX C

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

TEACHER QUESTIONNAIRE

DIVISION OF RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

Title IV Part C Evaluation Unit

Meeting Students Needs in the Multi-Age Environment

The purpose of this questionnaire is to assess teacher involvement in the Murch ESEA Title IV-Part C Project. Please respond to the following items as completely as you can. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. What grade levels are represented in your classroom? e.g. how many students are 1st graders, how many 2nd graders etc...

2. Which of the following instructional practices are part of your classroom routine? If yes, please indicate how often they are used.

	Yes	No
a) The math drill kit.	☐	☐
b) The spelling package.	☐	☐
c) The "Book Talks" program.	☐	☐

3. Are practical life experiences such as cooking and carpentry part of your classroom curriculum? If yes, please give examples. ☐ ☐

4. Please give examples of tests you have used or developed that measure competencies not measured by the PRT, PMT, and CTBS.

5. Which of the following are used in your classroom management system?

a) Learning stations - if yes, please indicate the topics and the number you normally have available. ☐ ☐

b) McBee Key Sort System ☐ ☐

c) Peer tutoring - if yes, please give examples. Yes ☐ No ☐

d) Self-reliant/independent student learning - if yes, please give examples of ☐ ☐

1. what you consider to be self-reliant/independent behavior

2. how you arrange for this behavior to occur.

6. Have you attended any

a) summer workshops? If yes, what topics were covered and how many did you attend? ☐ ☐

b) parent meetings? If yes, please describe. ☐ ☐

c) school functions? If yes, please describe. ☐ ☐

7. Have you used parent volunteers in your classroom? If yes, please describe their role and/or duties. ☐ ☐

8. Do you inform parents of child progress? If yes, please describe (e.g. how often, by the phone or written notes) ☐ ☐

9. Other comments

APPENDIX D

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Division of Research and Evaluation

Title IV-Part C Evaluation Unit

The purpose of this questionnaire is to assess the parent involvement component of the Murch ESEA Title IV-Part C Project. Please respond to the following items as completely as you can. Thank you for your cooperation.

1. What classroom is your child in? (Please indicate the teacher's name)._____

CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION

2. Have you served as a paraprofessional or volunteer in the project? If yes, please indicate how often you have helped with

	Yes	No
a) testing	☐	☐
b) typing	☐	☐
c) tutoring	☐	☐
d) class trips or picnics	☐	☐
e) training other parents	☐	☐
f) other (please describe)	☐	☐

	Yes	No
3. Have you been able to share a practical life skill such as carpentry, cooking, poetry or art with any project classroom? If yes, please state how often and describe the activity.	☐	☐

WORKSHOPS

	Yes	No
4. Have you attended any project workshops, e.g. summer workshops, night workshops? If yes, please indicate	☐	☐

a) when

b) topic(s)

5. Have you used anything you learned from the workshops to assist your child at home? If yes, please give an example. Yes ☐ No ☐

PROGRAM IN GENERAL

6. Regarding the monthly project NEWSLETTER;
   a) Have you found it to be useful? If yes, in what way? Yes ☐ No ☐

   b) Have you in any way contributed to the NEWSLETTER? If yes, please indicate how. Yes ☐ No ☐

7. Have you attended any meetings? If yes, please indicate how many. Yes No

   a) Home and School Association Meetings. ☐ ☐

   b) project parents meetings e.g. family gatherings, picnics. ☐ ☐

   c) neighborhood discussion meetings concerning the project. ☐ ☐

8. What is your view of the Murch Project
   a) with regard to its involvement of you as a parent?

   b) with regard to its effect on your child?

9. How do you feel the project could be improved?

10. Other comments

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APPENDIX E

RESPONSES TO PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE CONCERNING VIEW OF THE PROJECT AND IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Responses to Questiona 8, 9, 10 on Parent Questionnaire

8. What is your view of the Murch Project

a. with regard to its involvement of you as a parent?

Comment	Number of Parents Making Similar Comment
Felt welcomed, appreciated and utilized	5
Happy to be involved	5
Great idea	3
No time to be involved	11
Excellent	4
Interesting	2
Positive influence on the children and parents	2
Parental involvement essential	4
Offers a chance for whatever skills or talent a parent can provide	3
Children are more eager to learn when parents are involved	3
Helping with homework	1
Got to know what goes on in the classroom	1
Got me involved in working with my child at home	1
Minimal	1

b. with regard to its effect on your child?

Developed confidence, independence and interest	8
Great	4
Very positive	11
Pleasant environment to work on own level, accommodated academic and social needs	6
Teacher was main effect, not project	6
Takes test better now	2
Most satisfactory	5
Enjoys my presence	2
Independent and good feeling about work	5
None	2
Concerned about the effect of the pressure and vigor of up-front competition and emphasis on test	2
Had a chance to progress much more rapidly	1
Unsure of abilities due to multi-level	1

9. How do you feel the project could be improved?

Comment	Number of Parents Making Similar Comment
Teachers who sole job is to teach	6
Explaining at beginning of year to parents, goals, procedures and methodology	6
More activities, art music, writing	7
Utilize parents more	2
More interaction among teachers and parents	2
More structured feedback about child's progress	2
Smaller classes	1
Teacher should keep same group from year to year	2
Unfair to exclude children, every child should have access to resources	2
Improvement of Social Studies	1
Selection process	1
More homework	1
Inforce non-competitive concept	1
Good teachers	1
Develop procedures regarding scope of project to clarify issues which were disruptful project	1

10. Other comments:

Too much competition among children, pushing them to hard and too fast, too much emphasis on test, wide age range can cause social stress	7
Excellent project	4
Grateful to be part of this	2
Totally commend teachers and project, teachers were excellent	3
Pointers can be gained from Mrs. Ford's methods	1
Concern about the replacement of present teachers	2
Son shows progress in skills and confidence	1
Next year will become more involved and familiar	1
Offers hope that the system is improving the education children will receive	1
Project has been a positive experience for me and my child	1
My child has learned a considerable amount this year	1
This project had divided our school parent body	1
Too much was promised	1
Teachers frequent absence hard on children	1
Non-project teachers should not feel second rated	1
I picked up skills and teaching techniques which aid with helping younger child not in project	1
During strike parents used skills acquired to keep school going	1
Is there a way for working parents to be involved	1

APPENDIX F

A PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP AN INSTRUMENT/METHOD FOR MEASURING SELF-RELIANCE, INDEPENDENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY OF STUDENTS

A PROPOSAL TO DEVELOP AN INSTRUMENT/METHOD FOR MEASURING SELF-RELIANCE, INDEPENDENCE, AND RESPONSIBILITY OF STUDENTS:

Developing an Observation Instrument For a Title IV-Part C Project

Mark Arenas and
Marcia McBeath

What follows is a brief history of how one Title IV-C project devised a set of procedures that would evaluate one of their stated goals.

Objective

One objective of the "Meeting Student Needs (MSN) in the Multiage Environment" project is to increase student independence and self reliance. Because the pattern of instruction necessitates students being "on their own" for some time periods, it was felt that they should be self reliant in order to make good use of the time. However, agreement as to what is a self reliant student is open to interpretation. Is a student independent if she leaves the room to go to the bathroom or is she irresponsible for failing to notify the teacher? The first step in developing a method to measure independence, then, was to define it.

Criteria

One possible definition of self direction is offered by Martin (1975)* "The student who is said to be self-directed is one who enjoys a sense of freedom when he is permitted to have a reasonable share in the determination of his school behavior and in setting the general policies that shall govern his academic pursuits". It, no doubt, would be a complex and difficuly task to measure that elusive sense of freedom. If, however, we were to pay attention to the measures students take to make good use of their time, we could identify behaviors that might be considered independent and self reliant. Behaviors are simply what students do.

Defining what students do became a most important step in the development of the observation instrument. Behaviors had to be accurately described and classified into discrete categories. Some of the results of this "definition" process are presented below

Self-Directed

Activity clearly indicates that the student is engaged on a task by him/herself. The student gathers and prepares the material needed, acts on the material (book, paper, self test) and in general occupies self with the task. Student activity clearly indicates this quality by

a) physical distance (student is separated from others)
b) nature of work (material or task that is different from others)
c) demeanor of concentration

*Martin

Example

The student is reading a book either apart from or in the midst of classmates but doesn't talk with them nor they with him/her. The student is completing a worksheet or constructing a project by him/herself. The student may be involved with the same assignment or task as classmates but neither solicits nor receives input from them. The student goes to a learning station and records own task. The student does not necessarily have to remain stationary. He/She may move about the room as part of a task (e.g. collecting materials).

Cooperative

The student is interacting with another student or students engaged on a task. This interaction is focused on a task and can involve peer tutoring. The student can be giving or receiving assistance and the assistance can be verbal or gestural (e.g. pointing, demonstrating).

Example

The student participates in a group project or experiment: constructing a paper mache dinosaur; boiling eggs; drawing a map. Questions may be asked of one another; directions may be given either verbally or by gesture. The student is completing a worksheet with a partner - their interaction fluctuates, i.e. at times there is much verbal exchange, at others there is none.

Off-Task

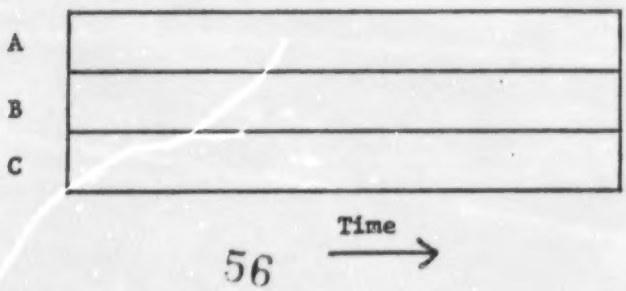
The student is talking with a classmate about non-task activities (TV, girls, sports). The student moves about the room with no apparent task or task related goal. The student goes to the bathroom.

Example

The student is not involved with a task. The student may be moving from or to a task but is not immediately engaged. distracting others; wandering around the room.

Method

After an agreement about what to measure had been reached, the question of how to measure came to the fore. Observation of the defined behaviors over time seemed to be a good way to get a representative sample of a given student's behavior. Very simply this can be seen by the following illustration.



Observing and recording behaviors A, B, and C as they occured during a given time span formed the basis for the MSN observation instrument (see attached). Letting each column stand for a 30 second interval would produce a 5 minute record of student behavior as it relates to independence and self-reliance.

Observers/ Observees

Once the specific criteria for and method of measurement had been developed, consideration was then given to both the observers and the students themselves. First the students.

Reactivity

Reactivity is simply the effect of an observer's presence on the subjects being observed. Several studies suggest that this is not a major threat to generalizability because it is short lived. Students habituate and adapt to the presence of an observer. But it is a factor and the influence of following students around a room should be taken into consideration. Basically this may involve four areas:

1) Conspicuousness of the Observer - Intrusiveness is important to reactivity. The more novel and intrusive the more distracting and the greater the effect on the students. This can be compensated for simply by being in the rooms often enough before data collection begins so that the novelty wears off.

2) Individual Differences of the Observers - Some children may react more. There is not much to do about this but make note of it.

3) Personal Attributes of the Observers - Factors such as sex, age, race, status. For the MSN project, 2 teachers would be rating and their familiarity with students might influence the children more than the 2 raters who were not teachers.

4) Rationale For Observation - If a thorough rationale for the observation can be explained to the students, this might be expected to decrease the guardedness and anxiety which may naturally develop from being matched. Letting the students in on the purpose honestly and straight-forwardly may help. However, to insure that they do not perform for us as they perceive we want them to, the explanation should leave out the specifics.

Reliability

Finally the issue of reliability became important. When two observers see student behavior do they agree on what they see? Can they reliably view a given behavior and agree what to call it according to the criteria? Achieving agreement 90% of the time would insure consistency of observation and it is to this goal that efforts are now being directed. Factors which are important include:

1) Definitions - well defined behavioral codes would restrict interpretive bias. The less ambiguous the terms the less chance for observers to disagree.

2) Training - practice with the instrument including continuous discussion and feedback might be expected to reduce observer confusion.

3) Objectivity - emphasizing to the observers, the importance of objectivity and impartiality may strengthen the observers identification with science and the scientific method.

The MSN project is currently field testing the observation instrument. Further refinement of definitions, reliability practice, and other adjustments that crop up are being addressed as personnel become familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of the method.

Self-reliant/Independent Student Behavior Rating Form

Name _____ Date _____ Time _____ Teacher _____

Male _____ Female _____ Age _____ Rating 1 2 3 4

Behavior	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total
Self directed											
Cooperative											
Off-Task											
Peer tutoring											
Onlooking											
Disruptive											
Adult Presence											

Comments: (included location)